

Begin Again
Week #7: Release

We want to live up to this phrase, "Be a bridge, build a bridge."

- **Be before you do.** We need to be ambassadors, human bridges who represent Jesus where we live, work, and play. **Then build bridges into people's lives and into our city that they can walk across to know God.**
- **But, if we have a culture that is inward focused, consumer oriented,** then when this mission and vision comes up against that culture, the culture will win and it won't even be a good fight.

"Leadership consultant, Dr. Samuel Chand, goes so far as to say that a church's culture determines the actual direction of a ministry—even more than published vision or mission statements. 'The strongest force in an organization is not vision or strategy—it is the culture which holds all the other components,' Chand says. Or, as Peter Drucker is known for saying, Culture eats strategy for breakfast. Pg. 80 Spark.

- Breakfast is early in the day. It didn't even last till lunch. In other words not even a fair fight.

One of the ways to change culture is to have values that direct our behavior. That's where...**Core Values** come into play. **These are words that describe** the kind of culture we want to have so that we can be a bridge and build a bridge.

"Values are like a magnetic force field surrounding the people and operations of the church, proactively shaping the things to come and correcting the things that go off track." Spark pg. 100

Here are the first three. If you want to hear more about these, just get on our **website** where you can listen to these sermons.

Real...authentic, displaying your brokenness to others, coming as you are, where you are. But who God wants to transform me into is also real.

Ready to be changed...God loves you as you are, but enough to not leave you there. **It is natural to be transformed by God if we don't resist.** That's what it means to be a **disciple or apprentice.**

Relational...It's how Jesus operated. Stop listening to his words and ignoring how he operated. He poured into **12, particularly 3.** We need people who will be **spiritual parents.**

The final part of this force field is captured in the word...**Release.**

It's about having a culture where we release our money, time, and our people.

So that we are all talking about the same thing, here's what I'm talking about...**To release is to let go of, set free, relinquish control over.**

Those are the **things that are hard** to "let go of, set free, or relinquish control over. Think about it. It's down right **unnatural.**

Is releasing really better than holding on to? That sounds good for other people, but it scares me. **Is that even reasonable, or is it a reckless way for us to act?**

This is not about not planning or being stupid. Let's toss money indiscriminately, have no boundaries or margin in our life, I'll sleep when I'm dead. **It is about prying open those hands...**metaphorically speaking.

When we think of releasing our money, time, and best people to God, tension is created. There's the tension between...**Scarcity thinking versus Kingdom thinking.**

The kingdom of God is like a little mustard seed that grows, a little yeast in a barrel of dough, seed thrown in good soil...

- **A little goes a long way. There's enough if the king is God.**

Biblical truth...**God is enough, he has enough, in his kingdom there is abundance of what we really need.**

This is not about following Jesus will make you healthy, wealthy, wise, and highly favored.

Scarcity thinking is about playing defense.

- **"Let's make sure nothing bad happens"** instead of going out swinging, trying to make something good happen.

Denzel Washington in the movie, "The Fence"...Most of the movie he is building a fence around his little back yard in Pittsburgh. He had been a **great baseball player**, but it was prior to Jackie Robinson breaking the color barrier in major league ball. He was better than many white players. He was hurt and **wouldn't let his son** play sports even when a scholarship was available. **He talked about not wanting to "strike out"**. So he built a fence. He ended up losing the love of his wife, son, and having a daughter with another woman, even losing his best friend. He lived by scarcity thinking and it **not only negatively affected his life**, but the lives of those around him.

I can relate to that kind of thinking. I have continually come back to one spiritual practice. It is praying Psalm 23. Listen to it and what does this say **about our King and his kingdom.**

The LORD is my shepherd;

I have all that I need.

² He lets me rest in green meadows;

he leads me beside peaceful streams.

³ **He renews my strength.**

He guides me along right paths,
bringing honor to his name

Even when I walk

through the darkest valley,^[a]

I will not be afraid,

for you are close beside me.

Your rod and your staff

protect and comfort me.
⁵ **You prepare a feast** for me
in the presence of my enemies.
You honor me by anointing my head with oil.
My cup overflows with blessings.
⁶ Surely your goodness and unfailing love will pursue me
all the days of my life,
and **I will live in the house of the LORD**
forever. Psalm 23

- **"I am one in whom Christ dwells and I live in his unshakable Kingdom."**

We are taking a good hard look at this verse in our Come and See Class. **"God has put all things under the authority of Christ and has made him head over all things for the benefit of the church. And the church is his body; it is made full and complete by Christ, who fills all things everywhere with himself."** Ephesians 1:22-23

- Earlier, it says we are to receive an **inheritance** since we trust him. **We are heirs** to the one who owns everything.

The church is made "full and complete by Christ" and he will, through his church, **"fill all things everywhere with his presence."** He is enough and he has enough!

¹⁷ Jesus replied, "You are blessed, Simon son of John, because my Father in heaven has revealed this to you. You did not learn this from any human being.¹⁸ Now I say to you that you are Peter (which means 'rock'); and upon this rock I will build my church, and all the powers of hell will not conquer it. ¹⁹ And I will give you the **keys of the Kingdom** of Heaven. Whatever you forbid on earth will be forbidden in heaven, and whatever you permit on earth will be permitted in heaven." Matthew 16:17-19

Let's add this all up. The Bible teaches that in God I have all I need, he prepares a banquet for me, my cup overflows, as a part of the church I am

his fullness, I am an heir to a king and the gates of hell cannot stop the church. And as his church, I am full and complete, having everything I need in order to fill the earth with his presence. Wow!

That's talking about you. That's talking about us.

Do I believe that a God who is loving and generous would tell me to release my money, time and our best people and then not meet our needs? Obeying always works. Not always easy or cheered by those around us.

- Giving to missions when our budget was tight. Everything within me says hold on to that money, you might need it later.
- If I tithe, I might need that money. We have a challenge budget.

To release is the opposite of hoard and consume

If I'm the king of my kingdom, then it's my stuff and I should have it available for my consumption. Release means I know who owns my money, my time, and my relationships.

Release implies trust in the one who is telling you to let go.

- Hoard and consume implies fear that the one telling me to release doesn't love me and doesn't know what is best for me. "But I might need this later."

Hoarding and consuming creates a lot of waste. That starts to stink. Releasing or sending is like deodorant for what will make us stink to those around us who don't know Christ.

When we think of releasing our money, time, and best people to God there is tension created between scarcity thinking and abundant Kingdom thinking. There's also the tension between...**Addition versus multiplication.**

Addition is about hoarding and then consuming. Because there is not enough and my heavenly father won't take care of me if I obey him,

then I must take matters into my own hands and stockpile or hoard so that I can still consume when times are lean.

Here's what it looks like in a church.

Let's say we take our programs and add to them so we have more programs. What will we need to do?

Let's say we want to add 100 more people to this church. What will we need to do?

What if we get more money? In the midst of the first two. What will we need to do? Spend it on more staffing.

What if we add on to this building to cover the increased numbers?

It takes a lot of energy; focus and resources that are about us, not on people who need a bridge to find their way back to God.

What if we changed the Scorecard? In the American church to score we keep what we accumulate. **What if we flipped it and gave points for how much we released?**

- That's a **river church**, not a lake church. **In a lake church, the people flow in and stay.** The goal is more people around one pastor. In a river church people instead flow in and then downstream. **We measure the flow instead.** (pg 85)

"Value survival, and you'll establish a scarcity (subtraction) culture. Value additional growth, and you'll establish an accumulation culture. Value multiplication, and you'll establish a sending culture." Spark pg 95

We are about to do that by measuring how many people we send to Beaverton. We are measuring how many people we send to Cultivate.

This is a challenge for us right now because we don't see everyone gathered together. **That additional growth mentality gives us a feeling that everything is ok because we see this room filled.** The pandemic is

challenging us to see the church as something that isn't all about this gathering getting bigger.

See if you can see multiplication and sending in these two verses?

Timothy, my dear son, be strong through the grace that God gives you in Christ Jesus. ² You have heard me (Paul) teach things that have been confirmed by many reliable witnesses. Now teach these truths to other trustworthy people who will be able to pass them on to others. 2 Timothy 2:1-2

- **Four generations** of disciples in this verse. Paul-Timothy-trustworthy people-those they "pass them on to", "others".
- You have and will continue to hear us saying that we want to become a **church of disciples who make disciples to the 3rd and 4th generation**. That's the verse behind that phrase.

Ok, that's Paul. Well how about Jesus, does he teach releasing? ³ So Jesus told them this story: ⁴ "If a man has a hundred sheep and one of them gets lost, what will he do? Won't he leave the ninety-nine others in the wilderness and go to search for the one that is lost until he finds it? ⁵ And when he has found it, he will joyfully carry it home on his shoulders. ⁶ When he arrives, he will call together his friends and neighbors, saying, 'Rejoice with me because I have found my lost sheep.' ⁷ In the same way, there is more joy in heaven over one lost sinner who repents and returns to God than over ninety-nine others who are righteous and haven't strayed away! Luke 15:3-7

We need to have some shepherds who we really love and really like and really need to go look for the 1 lost sheep and not be in our pen all the time any more.

Here are some examples...

- Julie...She is focusing more of her time on **TAPP and fighting human trafficking**. We are releasing her to do those things by freeing her from some things she does really well around here. **Mostly volunteers who lead worship**. It would be easy to say, "No, we need you here."

God will give us what we need and those women who she is helping start new businesses need her more.

- **Matt...explain the other half of Matt's job (pray for next fall and our discernment).**
- **Tim & Josie.**
- **Deb will not be here to play guitar and sing.**
- **Kids who went to Warner camp last summer and we didn't get to see them. Josiah could have led worship more and blessed us.**
- **The elders are encouraging me to coach tennis and be on the board at Warner Camp.**
- **The people who were are not going to see each Sunday because they are going to launch Beaverton.**

Because of this core value, not everything we do will be a conduit for Eagle Ridge Church of God's numerical growth.

There is tension involved when we start thinking about having a releasing/sending culture. There's tension between scarcity and kingdom thinking. There's tension between addition over multiplication. If we put all of that together in one statement it might look like this. Attract and accumulate versus develop and deploy.

Developing people who view themselves as ambassadors and disciple makers who are then deployed in ways that don't always benefit us.

When we try to find places for people to serve, the answer won't always be something that helps us do what we do here. It won't always be in house.

Disciples are people who are following Jesus, being changed by Jesus and joining Jesus' mission. We can't have this definition of what it means to make disciples and say, "I want all my kids, my friends, and the

leaders I like to be here to make me feel good." They aren't ours to keep.

Return to mission/vision. **People who are ambassadors have to be released.** Bridge builders have to go to the other side of the ravine and build where they live.

There's going to be tension with this value. We can be scared by it or we can lean into it and trust God.

Steps of Obedience

What do I squeeze? I'm going to list the usual suspects when it comes to what we are tempted to squeeze as opposed to releasing to God.

- My money
- My time
- My kids/family
- My church
- My _____

What is one thing can I do to trust and release? I'm going to begin to tithe my income to the Church. Is there something in your schedule that you can do to reflect that it isn't your time, it's God's. A young man told me that this week when he agreed to serve in a place in our church. He said, "It's not my time, it's God's." Has something become an idol to you and you've decided to squeeze it? What gets squeezed loses its value and uses its power. God cannot use what I squeeze.